

# **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Innovation Fund**

*Sponsored by Senator Kay Hagan [D- NC]*

Since 1867 historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have played a critical role in expanding educational opportunity for African American, low-income, and first generation college students. Today, HBCUs represent just 3 percent of the nation's four- and two-year nonprofit colleges and universities. However, they enroll 9 percent of African American undergraduates, produce 17 percent of all African American bachelor degree recipients and generate 22 percent of all bachelor's degrees in STEM fields earned by African Americans annually. HBCUs are also leaders in the post-baccalaureate arena, producing 50 percent of all African American teaching professionals and 24 percent of all PhDs.

Although, HBCUs are generating a diverse pipeline of college educated students, they have been disproportionately affected by the economic downturn and budget constraints. To help HBCUs expand their efforts to produce the next generation of highly-skilled college graduates, there has to be a strategic investment. The **HBCU Innovation Fund** would provide competitive grants to HBCUs to develop innovative initiatives to address specific outcomes. The grant could be utilized to include, but is not limited to, improving student achievement, enhancing student retention and completion, increasing student enrollment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields and expanding the uses of technology.

## **The Need for Legislation**

Currently, the Higher Education Act (HEA), Title III, Part B program, provides HBCUs with formula funding to strengthen their academic, administrative, and fiscal capabilities. However, this section does not create incentives for the development, testing, and spread of innovations. The two programs combined would provide HBCUs with the resources needed to meet current operational needs and to implement innovative solutions to meet specific challenges.

## **Legislation Summary**

The bill would authorize a competitive grant program at HBCUs by:

- Providing two grant options:
  - *Planning grant*- Is a one-year grant to plan, design, and develop innovations that would address the issues affecting a schools' student population.
  - *Implementation grant* – A 5 year a grant, conditional after 3 years on satisfactory progress to achieve specific outcomes articulated in the application.
- Requiring grantees to secure a 15% match from an external source to carry out their innovation.
- Requiring grantees to conduct an independent evaluation and closely track their success against the measures set out in their application.

Program Grant Priorities:

- Increasing the number of African American males who attain postsecondary degrees.
- Building partnerships between HBCUs and local high schools to increase the enrollment and successful completion of historically underrepresented populations in higher education.
- Strengthening partnerships to combine the resources of HBCUs and partner institutions to support entrepreneurship and research.
- Developing or bolstering programs and initiatives that support students learning in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).